

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

ANNUAL REPORT

OF

WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

IN

MAINE

1945

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College of Agriculture
of the
University of Maine
and the
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Cooperating

INTRODUCTION

When the farmer became so desperately short of assistance and the women were being urged to start victory gardens, it seemed to me time to guide our efforts toward farm production rather than amateur efforts in gardening. Not that victory gardens could not make a valuable contribution, but during World War I too many acres of unfertile land were planted by amateurs, who with the best intentions, wasted fertilizer, seed and womanpower as the results were not worth the effort.

It was with this in mind that I started my campaign to establish some sort of a Women's Land Army. Farm women have performed at one time or another most of the various operations at all possible for women and of course would naturally take over all possible work to carry on their own family farm, so our efforts must be directed toward urban women who would not naturally work on a farm where it was necessary to live-in, but might in this emergency choose this Service rather than one of the other Services for their contribution to the war effort.

The WEFS (Women's Emergency Farm Service) of Maine was organized for women living away from home while serving in the agricultural field of war activities, and I had hoped that this might develop into one of the Women's Services of the war. However, it did not and when the Women's Land Army was established, the WEFS became a division of the W.L.A. in Maine.

The farmer was possibly the hardest person to persuade that urban women could be of any real assistance and it is still only a small percentage of farmers who have been willing to adjust to new possibilities. Those who have been able to adjust have found urban women good substitutes and many wish they might continue with such assistance in the years to come.

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We have made repeated efforts to recognize all the women of our State who have contributed to the Food Production Program. Although we have a large number of women registered as members of the Women's Land Army, we realize that we have not been able to reach a large number of the women who have made an outstanding contribution. Many, we know, are not interested and others have not been found. We do know that farm women have been the largest factor among women in keeping up our record of production and the National Program has done much to encourage women to join this army of women agricultural workers.

State Personnel - 1945

Katharine L. Potter - Asst. State Farm Labor Supervisor
Priscilla M. Affel - Area Asst. State Farm Labor Supervisor
Bertha Crocker Gulliver - Area Farm Labor Supervisor
Mary Armitt Brown - Secretary

We were fortunate this year in having our staff made up of experienced workers with the WEFS which made our problems far easier to solve and less time was taken for training.

Priscilla Affel, who graduated from Smith College this Spring, had been a member of the Smith Unit at Lubec in 1943.

Mrs. Bertha Crocker Gulliver has been with us for three years.

Mary Armitt Brown worked at the Cape Unit and at Lubec in 1944 and asked for one week of farm work this year before taking up her duties as secretary.

Needs

The food situation had a definite effect upon the demand. Units were reduced on this account and farm wives felt they could not cope with the situation, so went without extra "live-ins".

The need for workers changed greatly from the time we first began recruitment to harvesting time. The strawberry and blueberry crops were poor and there were practically no apples to pick.

This changed the picture very definitely. We did add to our list a sizable bean picking camp which we have not had before.

Recruitment and Placement

Recruitment was carried on throughout the winter by talks before groups, radio talks and interviews, newspaper and magazine articles. The very definite information given by Charm Magazine brought fine results.

Massachusetts has helped us by passing on applicants who could not be placed there. Through the offices of Jesse H. Buffum, State Coordinator of Emergency Farm Labor, and Romona Davis, Assistant County Farm Labor Supervisor, we have had a number of workers.

In early July when we were suddenly called upon to open a camp in Brooks for bean picking, it seemed next to impossible to find enough workers. While I certainly wished no ill luck on New York State, I will admit that when the New York Office of the USES called me to ask if we could place 30 of their workers who were enrolled for bean picking, I welcomed them with open arms.

This interstate cooperation has meant a great deal to us and has worked out very satisfactorily.

Placement was from two to ten on individual farms. One roguing unit of six housed at an Inn and 2 camps. A few exceptions were made where one worker was placed on a farm.

We offered a week of training for dairy work at the University from June 15 to July 1, but only four workers availed themselves of the opportunity. However, these four workers gave outstanding service and felt that this week at the University was most helpful.

Camps & Live-ins

Newport Camp - operated for two months from June 26th to August 26th.

Personnel

Elizabeth Plimpton - Director
 Phyllis R. Phipps - Working Counselor
 Ruth Bleier - Working Counselor
 Miriam Petersen - Working Counselor
 Margaret Atchells - Junior Working Counselor
 Margaret Jullien - Junior Working Counselor
 Nancy Darcey - Junior Working Counselor
 Sheila Morris - Junior Working Counselor
 Marjorie Eustis)
 Theresa Robert) In charge of food

Elizabeth Plimpton directed this camp for the third year.

Phyllis Phipps was a working counselor at Newport in 1943.

Ruth Bleier worked with the WEFS in 1944.

For explanation of special project in supplying workers for Newport Camp, see Appendix page 12. Recruitment for this project could not be undertaken until too late in the season, but had there been time I believe we might have supplied the workers for our camp. The campers who did work with us were among the group receiving highest honors in skills at Camp Abena.

The buying and preparation of food was in the hands of two students from Farmington Normal School. This was a very satisfactory arrangement; the two girls were very able and created the best sort of spirit and cooperation in camp.

The work at this camp was cultivating 50 acres of beets and carrots for the Portland Packing Company.

Brooks Camp - operated from July 8th to August 25th.

Personnel

J. Moss Chrysler - Camp Manager
 Alice F. Day - Assistant Camp Manager
 Mary Marsh - Camp Counselor
 Helen K. Powell - Field Counselor

Miss Chrysler and Miss Day were with us at Oceanside Camp last year.

Three students from Farmington Normal School were in charge of the preparation of food.

The majority of workers at this camp were short term vacationists and except for about 10 days, the work was bean picking. Here Black and Gay Cannery Inc. guaranteed a minimum wage and paid the going wage for bean picking. See Appendix page 13 .

The food problem was a very serious one in both camps. Not ration points, but actual food shortages made it necessary to spend about twice the amount of time and energy on this phase of the work, and the entire staff participated in the collection of food for camps.

While the roguing crew were not live-ins, neither were they in a camp. These six roguingers were employed by a large potato operator with an acreage of about 1000 acres. Three of the workers had been in this crew the year before. The workers were housed at an Inn in Milo and taken to the fields each day. The hours are long and it is fairly hard work, but it is interesting and very good pay.

One live-in project, where eight workers were housed with the farm family, the workers acted as field supervisors as well as bean pickers on 25 acres of beans. Another live-in project of eight had a new arrangement on housing. This was a truck garden farm; a \$20,000.00 to \$30,000.00 operation. The workers were housed in a former tool house made over for this purpose. The cooking was done in the farm kitchen, but was served in the tool house. Still another group of eight lived in a bunk house and ate at the farm house.

Other places workers had their room and board at the farm house.

TYPES OF WOMEN WORKING IN AGRICULTURE

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Students | Women in various types |
| Teachers | of business |
| Bacteriologists | Defense plant workers |
| Biologists | Real estate operator |
| Occupational Therapists | Librarians |
| Social workers | Dramatist |
| Executives | Poets |
| Clerical workers | Writers |
| Homemakers | Musicians |
| | dress model |

KINDS OF WORK DONE BY WOMEN

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Plowed | Picked corn | Milk room work |
| Harrowed | Yarded pulp wood | Bottled milk |
| Planted | Lumbered | Drove milk route |
| Weeded | Cared for cows | Hayed |
| Hoed | Cared for sheep | Made crates |
| Cultivated | Cared for pigs | Sprayed apple trees |
| Drove Tractor | Cared for chickens | Pruned |
| Drove trucks | Graded, candled & | Thinned apples |
| cut potatoes | packed eggs | Picked apples |
| hogged potatoes | Milked | Picked small fruits |
| Picked up potatoes | Cleaned tieup | Harvested vegetables |
| Tended roadside stand | Canned and Packed | Packed vegetables |
| Helped in cannery | for freezing | Cooked at WEFS camps |

The work done by women was too varied to separate the value of crops harvested from other forms of assistance given. As nearly as we can estimate, the "man-days" work seem to be about forty-five hundred days in 1945.

SUMMARY

The County Agents have been most cooperative throughout this program and it was through them that we made our first contacts before the national program was inaugurated. We have had assistance and most friendly relations with all Home Demonstration Agents, County Farm Labor Supervisors and Clerks during this entire period.

We had a larger number of return workers this year than in any previous year, which shows a continued interest, and I may add, greater efficiency.

The other outstanding result for 1945 is that we showed through our camp projects that it would be possible for canners to operate self-supporting camps with high standards for inexperienced short term vacationists to harvest their canning crops. There seems little doubt that if properly done, it would be a popular project and one that would be valuable to employer and worker alike.

If this is not done, I hope that more work camp projects will be established by private agencies. There is certainly great value in this work from both an educational and health angle.